COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence
Rapid Community Assessment Mini Guide

A *quick, high-level* guide to help you understand your community's needs regarding COVID-19 vaccines in three weeks

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Vaccinate with **Confidence**
Strategy to Reinforce Confidence in Covid-19 Vaccines

Introduction

The rapid community assessment guide is for staff of state and local health departments involved in various aspects of COVID-19 vaccine planning who wish to better understand their community's needs. This guide may also be relevant for coalitions, hospitals, health systems/clinics, and other organizations that have strong connections with the communities they serve and want to respond to questions and concerns regarding COVID-19 vaccines.

Why conduct a rapid community assessment?

- To identify communities at risk for low uptake of COVID-19 vaccine.
- To inform future phases of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.
- To get an early understanding of what communities are thinking about COVID-19 vaccines and plan ahead for potential solutions to increase confidence and uptake.
- To identify community leaders, trusted messengers, and other important channels through which you can reach communities.
- To identify areas of intervention and prioritize potential intervention strategies to increase confidence in and uptake of COVID-19 vaccine.

The rapid community assessment consists of five steps.

1. Identify Objectives and Communities of Focus
2. Plan for the Assessment
3. Collect and Analyze Data
4. Report Findings and Identify Solutions
5. Evaluate Your Efforts

Timeline

Given the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic, establish a rapid timeline for all five steps--ideally, three weeks. This is not a strict guide but rather a suggested time frame.

Sample Timeline

Preparatory Phase: Prior to starting a rapid community assessment, get buy-in from the leadership of your health department, coalition, or organization for conducting the assessment and creating a plan for action. Early awareness and support from leadership makes it more likely findings will be put to good use in planning and guiding vaccination efforts.

Week 1: Planning and Buy-In

- Identify main objectives and your community(ies) of focus.
- Identify and form assessment team.
- Review existing data.

Week 2: Implementation and Analysis

- Use decision tool to identify data collection methods.
- Conduct data collection.
- Synthesize key findings across different tools--identify interventions for prioritization.

Week 3: Report Findings and Plan for Action

- Write report (narrative, one-page summary, slide presentation).
- Share/report out assessment results with the assessment team and wider community (e.g., department of health officials, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders).
- Prioritize solutions and develop implementation plans.
- Evaluate your efforts and plan for future community engagement.

Important note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some assessment activities usually performed in person (e.g., listening sessions) may be adapted to a virtual format. Always follow guidance from state and local health officials on community movement, gatherings, and other precautions when planning the assessment.

Step 1
Identify Objectives and Community(ies) of Focus

Identify Your Objectives

One of the most important elements of this rapid community assessment guide is to identify the primary objectives you wish to achieve. Example objectives include:

- Learn more about the perceptions of communities you believe may have significant concerns and questions about COVID-19 vaccines.
- Learn about COVID-19 vaccination barriers and enablers.
- Develop strategies for reinforcing vaccine confidence among communities of focus and addressing barriers preventing individuals from getting vaccinated.
- Understand how misinformation or too much information is influencing vaccine perceptions and how to address this.
- Tailor communication/behavioral strategies for increasing COVID-19 vaccine uptake based on community needs.

It can be helpful to formulate the objective(s) as a question--one that working with the community can help you answer.

Identify Your Community(ies) of Focus

Consider these factors when deciding where to focus:

- Vaccine rollout: Focus on a population for whom vaccines will be available in the next one to two months.
- Populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19: Populations that have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 will be prioritized to receive the vaccine. These categories include, but are not limited to:
    - People at increased risk of death due to COVID-19
    - Critical infrastructure workforce
    - People at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness
    - People at increased risk of acquiring or transmitting COVID-19
    - People with limited access to routine vaccination services

Criteria that can help you prioritize include:

- Communities that have experienced disproportionately high rates of SARS-CoV-2 infection and severe COVID-19 disease or death (either historically or recently in "hotspots")
- Communities that have high rates of underlying health conditions that place them at greater risk for severe COVID-19 disease (e.g., heart disease, lung disease, obesity)
- Communities likely to experience barriers to accessing COVID-19 vaccination services (e.g., geographical barriers, health system barriers, language and cultural barriers, mixed household status barriers, and immigration status barriers)
- Communities likely to have low acceptance of or confidence in COVID-19 vaccines (e.g., Blacks, Native Americans and Alaska natives, including indigenous people for Latin America)

- Communities where COVID-19 mitigation measures (e.g., mask wearing, social distancing) have not been widely adopted
- Communities where there were challenges in previous phases of COVID-19 vaccine rollout
- Communities with historically low adult vaccination rates
- Communities with a history of mistrust in health authorities or the medical establishment (e.g., Blacks, refugees, non-U.S.-citizens, Native Americans and Alaska natives, including indigenous people for Latin America)
- Communities with a history of mistrust in government agencies (e.g., Blacks, refugees, non-U.S.-citizens, Native Americans and Alaska natives, including indigenous people for Latin America)
- Communities that are not well-known to health authorities or have not traditionally been the focus of immunization programs (e.g., Non-U.S.-born persons, particularly non-U.S.-citizens, and migrant and seasonal workers)

Review Existing Data

Once you have identified your focus community(ies), rapidly review existing data sources to get a picture of your focus community's demographics, health status, and how individuals have been impacted by COVID-19. You may want to check with your state and local health department to see if they have data dashboards with racial and ethnic variables, ZIP Code data, etc. Suggested data to review are contained in Box 2 of the full Rapid Community Assessment Guide.

Step 2
Plan for the Assessment

Identify Your Objectives

Stakeholders are people who are invested in the focus community as well as the implementation and/or outcomes of immunization programs. Securing key stakeholders' support will help you to gain community members' trust, paving the way for a successful assessment.

Sample Stakeholders to Engage

- Public sector (e.g., USDA Cooperative Extension Service, Americorps, Census)
- Unions (e.g., police, fire, transportation, healthcare, teachers)
- State chapters of professional associations
- Faith-based organizations and religious leaders
- Leaders of local health systems, hospitals, and clinics
- Pharmacists and clinician experts such as infectious disease physicians or medical providers from a large community practice
- Organizations serving populations disproportionally affected by COVID-19 (e.g., people experiencing home-lessness, people who use drugs, rural populations, people with disabilities, and agricultural and food processing workers)
- Community-based organizations working with immigrants and refugees
- Other organizations with wide community reach (e.g., YMCAs, YWCAs)
- Organizations serving seniors (e.g., Meals on Wheels, senior centers)
- Citizen advisory groups (city, county)
- Leaders of assisted living communities and long-term care facilities
- Managers of food-processing plants and grocery stores
- Personnel in congregate settings (e.g., jails, prisons)
- School communities:
    - School administrators
    - Educators
    - School nurses (may be employed by the health department or the school system)
    - Parent Teacher Association (PTA)/Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) members
- Community media outlets (especially those that serve closed/isolated communities)

Get Buy-In

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person meetings may not be advisable. Other options include:

- Individual phone calls
- Group calls or virtual meetings (if appropriate)
- Attending events being held by stakeholders (virtual or in person, observing COVID-19 precautions). For example, a pastor may invite you to speak at a church service.

During the call or meeting, cover the following topics:

- Reasons for the assessment (objectives) and who is conducting it
- Assessment timeline
- Ideas for data collection activities
- Community members who might be interested in being part of the assessment team (see section on forming the team below)
- How the assessment data will be used and who will have access to it
- Plans for reporting back to the community

It can be helpful to prepare a short, one-page document in plain language or a brief presentation that summarizes:

- COVID-19 rates
- Vaccine distribution plans (or rates, if the vaccine has already been distributed)
- Assessment objectives
- Contact information for your team

Have the one-page document translated into the language most commonly spoken by community members. You may want to include a key informant from the community when developing the document to avoid any cultural or language/translation issues.

Form the Assessment Team

The ideal assessment team will include individuals committed to understanding and addressing community needs regarding COVID-19 vaccines and who have varied backgrounds, skills, and experience.

In some cases, you may wish to work exclusively with an outside organization to conduct the assessment, such as an academic group or a community-based organization. If you choose this route, we recommend that the health department work closely with the group selected to ensure local perspectives are represented on the assessment team.

Some staff may be able to participate as part of their regular job (e.g., if they work for a community-based organization). However, in other cases, you may need to hire staff temporarily or provide a stipend; if so, be sure to include this cost in your budget. It may not be realistic to expect community members to donate their time, so budget for people's time and labor.

Potential Resources Needed

- Information technology services (e.g., to support virtual meetings)
- Data collection equipment/supplies (e.g., laptops, tablets, software, paper questionnaires)
- Printing (e.g., reports and questionnaires)
- Translation and interpretation services (e.g., for data collection, reports, community forums, focus groups)
- Incentives for survey/focus group participants (e.g., gift cards or retail discount coupons)
- Consultants who may have specialized skill set with data collection methods of choice
- Other miscellaneous expense

Step 3
Collect and Analyze Data

Human Subject Considerations

Check whether your agency or organization requires Human Subjects or Institutional Review Board (IRB) review for collecting community data. The purpose of an IRB review is to make sure there are no unintended consequences of data collection, all risks to participants are minimized, and all data are kept confidential.

If your organization does require IRB review, consult with the person who coordinates it. This person can determine whether an IRB review is needed or whether your project is exempt from review. Some organizations or agencies may not require IRB review or may have exemptions or emergency processes that allow you to collect data quickly during a situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participant Recruitment

Once you have identified your communities of focus, obtain a broad mix of people within those communities so you can hear all perspectives. Include different ages, gender identities, races/ethnicities, primary languages, national origins, educations, and occupations. Partnering with organizations already strongly connected to your community of focus can be a great way to advertise and recruit assessment participants and save time.

Consider reaching out to:

- Professional associations
- Trade unions
- Community-based organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Neighborhood/homeowners associations
- Colleges/universities
- Online communities representing local groups

Additional recruitment tips:

- Consider a variety of methods to reach potential participants including email, text message, social media, traditional media, and newsletters.
- Token incentives such as gift cards or retail discount coupons can also increase response and participation rates.
- Think about where people in your focus community live, work, learn, and socialize. See table 2 in the full Rapid Community Assessment Guide for related examples.

Data Collection Tools and Analysis

Several tools and templates have been developed for you to use and build on if you do not have existing data collection tools available.

Summary of Available Tools

Tools	Objective
COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Learning Template	A template that helps you document and learn from successes and challenges during previous phases of COVID-19 vaccine rollout to prepare for subsequent phases.
Implementation Guide for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Listening Session	KIIs: Individual structured interviews useful for gathering information about a specific topic. KIIs can provide individual perspective and a nuanced understanding of issues in the community regarding COVID-19 vaccine confidence. Listening Sessions: Guided discussions with a small group of participants chosen based on their role or their organization's role in the community. Like KIIs, listening sessions can provide a nuanced understanding of community questions, concerns, and perspectives toward COVID-19 vaccines.
COVID-19 Observation Form	Attend and observe meetings where the target audiences congregate or observe listening sessions facilitated by others.
Vaccine Confidence Survey Question Bank	Questionnaires that assess how people think and feel, what social processes affect their lives, what practical obstacles they face, and what their motivation is to get vaccinated.
Social Listening or Social and Traditional Media Monitoring Tools	Social listening refers to the process of collecting data from social and traditional media platforms to track online discussions, trends, and sentiments about a topic. It is useful for understanding the information landscape (including misinformation) and concerns and attitudes of your community of focus. It also can inform digital marketing and communication strategies.
Vaccine Insights Synthesis Tool	Compare and contrast findings from surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations to identify themes.
Examples of Evidence-Based Solutions to Increase Vaccine Confidence and Uptake	Identify solutions/interventions to address specific issues identified by rapid community assessment.

Data Synthesis

The Insights Synthesis Tool can help to structure, visualize, and compare all the findings from your assessment in a systematic manner.

Choosing Data Collection Tools

Before you begin your assessment, determine your organization's capacity. Here are some factors to consider:

• Available budget

• Available time

• Available staff

• Accounting of what tools are already being used (you may wish to choose different tools to avoid duplication of data already collected or available)

• Expected/desired timeline

• Existing partnerships/links to communities

Basic Assessment	Qualitative and Survey Assessment	Comprehensive Assessment
Vaccine Rollout Learning Template Social Listening Tools	Key Informant Interviews Listening Sessions Observations Surveys	Vaccine Rollout Learning Template Social Listening Tools Key Informant Interviews Listening Sessions Observations Surveys

Step 4
Report Findings and Identify Solutions

Report Findings

After you have collected and analyzed data, you need to report your findings back to your communities of focus and identified stakeholders. Discuss and prioritize solutions. This is the most important step in a community assessment because the goal of this process is to engage and build relationships.

Tips for Reporting Findings:

- Create a report that is user-friendly for the community.
- Consider both the format and the literacy level.
- Be careful not to include any names or descriptors that could identify who said what, especially in small communities.
- Use general descriptors to attribute verbatim quotes, such as "pediatrician, private practice" or "elementary school parent."

Suggestions for Reporting Assessment Findings

Examples of Sections in Your Report	Examples of Report Format
- Background, including why the community was selected for assessment - Key objectives of the rapid community assessment - Summarized methodology - Summarized key findings and disaggregated by relevant subgroups (e.g., race/ethnicity, language, gender identity, etc.) - Recommended solutions - Next steps	- PowerPoint presentation - One-page results summary - Longer narrative report - Visualization of key data - Interactive platforms, such as a Miro whiteboard

Identify Solutions

Effective solutions will:

- Increase trust in COVID-19 vaccines.
- Establish or solidify getting vaccinated as a social norm.
- Motivate or encourage people to get the vaccine.
- Improve physical access to the vaccine.

Strategic thinking on the following questions can help to identify solutions:

1. What are the main barriers affecting your community of focus's willingness or ability to be vaccinated?
2. What, if anything, is already being done to address barriers to COVID-19 vaccine confidence and uptake? How effective are these efforts, and where is there room to improve?
3. Which issues can be more easily addressed than others?

Other factors to consider when considering solutions to implement and evaluate:

- Importance/expected impact
- Feasibility
- Scalability
- Sustainability

Potential solutions to address COVID-19 vaccine confidence and uptake:

- Education campaigns
- On-site vaccination (workplaces, schools, faith-based institutions)
- Cash or non-cash incentives
- Free/affordable vaccination services
- Institutional and/or provider recommendation
- Reminder and recall
- Message framing
- Vaccine champions

The "Examples of Evidence-Based Solutions to Increase Vaccine Confidence and Uptake" table provides a list of solutions/interventions to address the specific issues identified by the rapid community assessment. This list is based on scientific review of current literature. Please note this list is a starting point in thinking about solutions for greater uptake of COVID-19 vaccine. You can also consider approaches such as motivational interviewing, peer-to-peer engagement, or education through entertainment, storytelling, and other narrative methods that may not be well-reflected in current literature or evidence-based approaches but may be identified by your communities of focus as a potential new way to increase vaccine confidence and uptake.

Step 5
Evaluate Your Efforts

After you have concluded your rapid community assessment, revisit your objectives to determine if you have enough information about communities of focus in your jurisdiction to make actionable recommendations to increase confidence in and uptake of COVID-19 vaccines.

Some questions that can help you evaluate your efforts:

- Have you achieved your primary objective(s)?
- Do you have additional objectives you would like to pursue?
- Have you identified your communities of focus, and do you have enough data to understand access and demand barriers related to COVID-19 vaccines?
- Do you feel you can address your focus communities' needs related to COVID-19 vaccines?
- Are you prepared for the next stage of COVID-19 vaccine rollout?

After evaluating your efforts and consulting with stakeholders, including members of your communities of focus, you can decide whether you need to conduct additional rapid community assessments in other targeted areas. We also recommend checking back in with your communities of focus to understand whether you have new challenges to understand.